

**Summary of BJE**  
**“Leadership Through Stories” Session**  
**November 15, 2009**  
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*The following is a summary of the data from the BJE “Leadership Through Stories” Session on November 15, 2009:*

**Objectives:** The objectives for this session were to provide an opportunity for clergy and lay leaders to:

- (1) Craft stories about how learning is changing in their congregations to develop and support whole person learning and to help reach their respective priority goals; and
- (2) Identify opportunities to activate their leadership roles as advocates and culture changers within their congregations using their stories.

**“Facts” vs. “Stories:** To illustrate the power of stories as a vehicle for leadership and influence, participants developed the following lists differentiating sharing “facts” and sharing “stories:”

<b>Facts</b>	<b>Stories</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Just numbers</li><li>• Forgettable</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Involve people, not just numbers</li><li>• Provides a way to present</li><li>• Is about “I”</li><li>• Crystallizes</li><li>• Interprets</li><li>• Can be passed on</li><li>• Creates connection and increases trust</li><li>• Weaves together different dimensions</li></ul>

In short, stories create context, which creates a frame that enables seeing through a different perspective, which leads to insight and new understanding.

**Appreciative Inquiry Interviews:** Participants then created pairs and interviewed each other using an Appreciative Inquiry process asking each other to share stories about times they have (1) experienced “whole person” learning and (2) successfully

advocated on behalf of something in which they deeply believed by using a story. The following are the themes from the stories that they shared:

- Making connections with parents in the congregation
- Unexpected richness of the human experience
- Empowerment and affirmation
- Stories coming alive
- Simultaneous learning and imparting
- Fundamental change
- Learning doesn’t always happen the way we expect

**Application:** After having a chance to see the power of stories as tools for learning and advocacy, participants created small groups to discuss ways they can use stories as tools for:

- Sharing the benefits of and advocating for whole person learning and their respective priority goals;
- Developing buy-in for organizational change; and
- Creating a culture that supports whole person learning and their respective priority goals.

Participants listed the following as the insights, ideas and suggestions that arose from their discussions:

- Involving families
- Asking others to tell their stories
- Ask people to be characters in the larger story
- Democratize: we all have stories
- Use stories as a teaching tool
- Stories come out of congregational life
- Stories impart meaning
- The benefit of telling personal stories